

BIRTH, ADOLESCENCE, MARRIAGE

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with the others, including the one who had just been leader, as followers. It is said that there was rarely friction among the joint husbands, since each realized that his turn would come as head of the household, and meanwhile the wife endeavoured to share her favours indiscriminately. The children were considered equally the offspring of each husband, thus automatically acquiring membership in several ancestral families. Such were regarded as indeed fortunate, provided with every potential means of assistance in the struggle of life. 595 556 [851]

Recognizing its importance, every effort was made to verify this information. Further questioning elicited the statement that the informant had never seen a case of this, though he asserted that when a young man he had often heard of it and that the custom had then only recently died out. Another old man and an elderly woman confirmed the above statement almost word for word, and each added that it was well known when they were young, though they had never actually seen it in practice. One man believed that the custom had formerly prevailed in several parts of the coast, and said that he had heard of its occurrence among the "Kwatsino" people near Newitla. Considering the reliability of his informants, the writer gives as his personal belief that the institution of polyandry among the daughters of chiefs occurred in Bella Coola not many years ago. Knowledge of the term of address for co-husband, already given, is strong evidence in support of this view. 128 595 556

DISCREDITABLE MARRIAGES

Since it has been assumed that Y is the daughter of a chief, properly married with due formality, it is necessary to digress still further from the account of her relations with X to describe connections of a less creditable nature. The most common of these was with slaves. Though frowned upon by all Bella Coola ethics, such alliances, of a permanent nature, do not appear to have been rare. In some cases it was a man who thus demeaned himself, in some a woman. Since no slave could provide the goods necessary for an elaborate wedding, the 567 588

567 ceremony usually consisted simply of the man and woman
588 living together. In theory, this prevented the children from
ever obtaining a name or other prerogative embodied in the
ancestral myth of the free-born parent, and an effort was al-
ways made to conceal from them the details of the ancestral
family's origin myth. But, as already described in the section
dealing with slaves, the expenditure of valuable presents served
to eradicate, or at least to cover, the blot. If the child suc-
ceeded in giving many potlatches, the stain was generally
forgotten. On the other hand, if the child of a slave married
to a free man was not "washed," he could always be shamed
by a reminder of the disgrace of his parents' wedding.

682 In case of murder, the son or other near relative of the
victim sometimes accepts a daughter or other member of the
offender's family instead of exacting blood revenge. The bride
is delivered to her husband with valuable goods "to wash away
the blood," but these never suffice entirely to remove the dis-
grace from her or her children. The latter may inherit names
and prerogatives from their father, but even if they attain to
the position of chiefs, they can always be put to shame by
reference to their mother's marriage as an atonement for
murder. Of course the influence of a great chief makes it im-
politic to refer to his ancestry, and there are a few instances of
men having reached such a position of eminence that the blot
has been practically forgotten. The wife's family must con-
tinue to give presents to the husband for years after marriage,
otherwise her lot is unenviable indeed, and her children have
the status of the unwashed offspring of a slave and a free-man.
In some cases a marriage of this type is entered upon years
after a murder, if a son or other descendant wishes to end the
anxiety of constantly expecting blood revenge.

REPURCHASE OF THE WIFE

556 Repurchase of a wife is the necessary consequence of every
583 reputable Bella Coola marriage. It is assumed that the pre-

586 One very old man is still, 1915, commonly called by this
626 last designation, much to his annoyance.

839 When the songs had been sung, each accompanied by the
746 dancing of the divorced husband, the donor of the ceremony
[556] distributed food and the guests departed. The only advantage
in the giver of the rite was that it enabled him to show his
wealth in an apparently disinterested fashion by gifts of food.
Usually he was a friend of the aggrieved husband.

When a husband divorced his wife, the other women of the
village used to perform an exactly similar ceremony. The
same type of songs were composed, and during their singing
the divorced wife used to dance, wearing above her head
[292] representations of a penis and testicles. By means of hidden
strings she was able to cause the former to become erect.

On other occasions the ceremony was varied by an an-
nouncer taking the offended party about the appearance of
the divorcer. There followed a minute and highly coloured
description about the unpleasantness of his genital organs, a
description which was swiftly incorporated into the songs.

It can be taken as a matter of course that the above descrip-
tion is little more than an outline of the Bella Coala ceremony
of shaming. In spite of its deficiencies, it is important, as
evidence of the former sentiment with regard to divorce.
Obscene though the ceremony must have been, both in acting
and in the free use of personalities, it must have been a powerful
deterrent to divorce.² Indeed it would be difficult to imagine
a stronger one in a community where a man's position is judged
by public opinion and where his greatest aversion is to public
ridicule. It is unfortunate that we shall probably never know
whether the rite was associated with chiefs or commoners.

CEREMONIAL MARRIAGE

588 Since marriage gains much of its importance from the com-
556 plicated business transactions between the two families, with

[848] ²A similar rite was occasionally carried out for unmarried youths.

MEXICAN MARRIAGE, MARRIAGE

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the usual date selected, it is perhaps not surprising that the
Bella Cade carry out a ceremonial form strictly disconnected
from actual rights. It is believed that such ceremonial cer-
emonies were performed by the first inhabitants of this earth,
and that they have been customary ever since. A careful
father or uncle always undertakes to arrange such a rite for a
girl when she is two or three years of age. The relatives decide
on some influential chief whom they would like to have as their
daughter's fictitious husband, considering his wealth and pos-
sible, but not his age. They interview the proposed bride-
groom, who may consult his wife or other relatives before
accepting, although he rarely refuses, as that would be an
insult to the parents as well as a financial loss to himself.
No period of engagement is necessary, as the wedding is
arranged for the near future. Among important chiefs the
ritual is identical with that of real marriage, though usually it
is somewhat curtailed. The relatives of the bride welcome her
husband and his relatives in their house and receive from him
rather larger presents than they give; the same custom
is made about it being the proper time to take the bride
to her new home, and the husband and his party depart, with-
out the girl. Presents of names or prerogatives may likewise
be transmitted. The two are now considered as married, al-
though there is no necessity for husband and wife even to see
one another; on the other hand, there is no reason for avoid-
ance since the marriage is essentially a business affair and not
a sexual one. Whenever the husband gives a postlock or other
ceremony, he is aided by the relatives of his fictitious wife,
sometimes to a greater extent than by the relatives of his real
one. This ceremonial wedlock may last for three or four years,
until the relatives of the wife rebury her from her husband. On
this occasion it is essential that he receive from the relations of
his fictitious wife presents of greater value than he himself has
given, otherwise she would be disgraced. Ceremonial marriage
differs from real marriage in that one repurchasing terminates

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is, although it is customary for the parents of a wife to outfit their wealth on several occasions.

What are the advantages of such an agreement to the two parties? The husband receives considerable assistance, both in actual goods and in ceremonial prerogatives. Moreover, his estate is protected by the desire shown by others to have him as husband of their daughters. The advantages to the wife are more difficult to describe. Financially, her relatives assist her, yet they consider that the prestige gained by their daughter as wife of a highly esteemed fully compensated for their economic loss. Accordingly, they take pains to have a daughter married several times before puberty, either simultaneously or in succession. Thus there is a form of ceremonial polyandry existing in Bulla Cole at the present day. No ceremonial marriage takes place after puberty. In later years, when the wife grows up, marries, and has children of her own, their estate is increased materially by the polyandry marriage of their mother. They address her fictitious husband as "father," and his children as brother or sister, although there are no incest prohibitions with regard to them. A chief sometimes arranges the betrothal of women or other prerogatives on the children of a fictitious ex-wife, but such favors are too uncertain to provide a motive for the prevalence of the rite. Its value rests on the esteem attached to a woman whose relatives have shown their wealth and power by marrying her several times. When her children quarrel with their playfellows, it is common to hear one boast:

"I have three fathers. How many have you?"

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Occasionally the relatives of a fictitious bride are unable to provide the goods to repurchase her from her husband and the girl remains disgraced for life. In no circumstances has her husband any claims to marital rights with her, and in due course she can marry someone else; but it is never forgotten that she was not rebought from her husband. In 1916 a girl about four years of age was married to a man of sixty, who at the time gave her relatives \$80 and a motor boat. She had

GHOST, GOWDENCE, MARRIAGE

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and yet been expounded in 1914 and the Bella Coola were beginning to look outward at her. It is doubtful whether the child realized that she was married, certainly the fact had not the slightest effect on her behavior. Unless the wife is otherwise, any money which she took to her husband at her fictitious marriage remains his property.

Commercial marriages are sometimes carried out for special reasons. If the husband at a real marriage feels that he is over-indebted to his wife's relatives through the names and possessions they have brought him, he sometimes arranges to counter some of them and thus even the transaction by ceremonially marrying one of his young female relatives to one of his wife's family. He takes back some of the acquired names to his fictitious husband and the matter is amicably arranged. Barring the difficulties experienced by the father of many daughters, one of his sons-in-law may, if his father-in-law has many sons although his daughter and so demonstrated his ability, try to arrange a fictitious marriage between the old man and one of his son-in-law's relatives. It often happens that the proud old chief will decline such assistance, confident in his own ability and prestige. Revenge is often settled by a fictitious marriage, arranged in the same manner and with the same attached origins as that already described. Sometimes the Indian is ceremonially married to the son of a chief, instead of to the chief himself, though no true wedlock follows.

It is not even necessary to have a small girl to act as bride. If a man wishes to ally himself by marriage to a famous chief and lacks a daughter, he can perform the marriage rite with a "bride" consisting of his finger, leg, hand, or other part of the body. In a case in 1915 the "wife" was a favourite dog, which was duly married to a chief. In fact, ceremonial marriage is merely one of the many methods used by the Bella Coola to enter into financial dealings with an influential chief; it provides an honourable means of displaying the wealth of the bride's family; it increases the prestige of a girl and her relatives, or the prestige of her relatives alone if "she" is an inani-

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THE BELLA CIRCA INDIANS

- 511 more object. Bella Circa Indians are always anxious to
556 arrange such undertakings; the purchase is the culminating
point, but the same principle pervades their whole life.

It is to the advantage of the intending donor of a purchase to become the fictitious husband of as many children as possible. Accordingly he sometimes takes the initial step, as is customary for the relatives of the husband in real marriages, but not in ceremonial. In such a case it is necessary for him to offer some inducement, perhaps in the form of one of the few women's robes brought to earth in the beginning of time. He approaches a suitable father-in-law, suggesting that on a fictitious marriage he would be willing to give his wife a noble woman's name. If this is agreeable, the rite is carried out accordingly. The wife is in many cases a son of the person to whom the proposal was made; he duly receives a woman's name, the only circumstance under which this is possible. The actual designation will probably be returned through many repurchasings, but the boy has reached an enviable position. In later years he can always silence a person with whom he is quarrelling by saying:

"I need not answer you. You cannot even approach my body, so thickly am I padded with the goods which my father used when he rebought me."

556 Another business transaction of a similar nature is the
608 giving of a small infant to an old person to "hold." This ap-
858 pears to be uncommon, and the only instance about which
information was available occurred under the following cir-
cumstances:

A man and a woman were married with full ceremony and the best of feelings prevailed between the two families. The wife was several times rebought until she and her relatives had fully maintained their dignity, in fact the relations of the husband felt that they were being out-shone. Then the wife's father died. To mark their sympathy, the husband's family gave the widow one of her daughter's children to "hold." Valuable non-returnable presents were transmitted as "soft